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ABSTRACT

This report describes the implementation and operation of a 6-month peer coaching program, "Collegial Coaching: Transfer of Learning through Reflective Practice," at Estacado High School in Lubbock (Texas). The program was originally designed to assist teachers to improve their own management and instruction in the classroom. However, it was noticed that it had become an effective forum for dialogue for beginning as well as seasoned teachers to better understand and work with diversity in the classroom. The Estacado Model is a reflective model; it is teacher-centered and teacher controlled with an important distinction between feedback and coaching. It is also uniquely collaborative, organized by teaching field, and very time efficient. It was presented in three training phases, several months apart, with one full day for each step. The three phases are: peer watching, peer feedback, and peer coaching. This 3-step approach provided educators with theory and guided practice so that they could return to their own schools to implement what they had learned. An important lesson from the model is that peer coaching is a powerful and effective way of assisting teachers to transfer new knowledge into practice. Other lessons learned include the critical aspect of communication and scheduling; the need for additional practice and training materials and a central location for input; the need to prevent the project from becoming personality dependent; and the impact of administrative and teacher assessments. (Contains 11 references.) (NAV)

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# A Minority High School Uses Peer Coaching as a Forum for Dialogue to Better Understand Diversity

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## ABSTRACT

Most Americans continue to find themselves as a part of an increasingly diverse society. These changing demographics will require teachers at all educational levels to provide instruction to increasingly diverse student populations. In addition, teachers must be prepared to deal with other diversity issues such as: gender, disability, poverty, affirmative action, and sexual orientation. What type of training/information should be provided to inservice teachers, especially the novice, to assist them to work more effectively with diversity? There are several ways of providing such training; however, one way to address this question was unexpectedly discovered by the faculty of a minority high school as they implemented the process of a unique peer coaching model. The peer coaching program was originally designed to assist teachers to improve their own management and instruction in the classroom; however, it was noticed that this training program on many occasions also became an effective "forum" for dialogue for teachers to better understand and work with diversity. This newly discovered forum immediately became popular with the beginning teachers as well as many of the experienced teachers. This paper describes the implementation and operation of this particular peer coaching model and how it also became an effective "forum" for dialogue for teachers to better understand diversity.

**A Minority High School Uses Peer Coaching as a Forum**

**for Dialogue to Better Understand Diversity**

As we approach the next millennium, Americans find themselves a part of an increasingly diverse society. These changing demographics will require teachers to provide effective instruction to increasingly diverse student populations. How do inservice teachers, especially the novice, learn about the way students from various linguistic, ethnic, economic, and social backgrounds learn or process information? From what knowledge bases can teachers use to develop effective instructional strategies for these learners? Also, what can we learn from our experienced and seasoned teachers concerning diversity? There are several ways of providing such training; however, one way to specifically address these questions was unexpectedly discovered by the faculty of a minority high school as they implemented the process of a unique peer coaching model. Initially, the peer coaching program was to assist the teachers to improve specific teaching skills; however, it was noticed that the program/process on many occasions also became an effective "forum" for dialogue for teachers striving to better understand and work with diversity. This newly discovered forum immediately became popular with the beginning teachers as well as the experienced teachers. This paper describes the implementation and operation of this unique peer coaching model and how it also became an effective forum for dialogue for teachers to better understand diversity.

## Search For A Staff Development Model

The faculty of Estacado High School in Lubbock, Texas wanted to insure/improve the transfer of teacher professional development into classroom learning (student achievement). This desire emanated from a common complaint from many of the teachers who stated that they had

often attended staff development activities, even some good ones, but seldom did this training transfer back into the classroom for improved student achievement. After considerable discussion and review of the literature especially in the areas of clinical supervision and peer coaching, a staff development training program was developed. This training program, "Collegial Coaching: Transfer of Learning Through Reflective Practice," was designed and presented over a six-month period. This program, also referred to as the Estacado Model, is an adaptation of the Peer Coaching for Educators model, commonly referred to as the South Carolina Model, developed by Barbara Gottesman and James Jennings (1994). The model was presented in three training phases: (1) Peer Watching, (2) Peer Feedback, and (3) Peer Coaching.

Unlike most other peer coaching models (i.e., technical, mentoring, evaluation, or some form of clinical supervision), the Estacado Model can be referred to as a reflective model - teacher centered and teacher controlled, even to the extent that all notes/records are returned to the teacher. An ideal training/learning situation would be for a teacher to reflect and solve her/his problems or acquire new skills using only feedback and no coaching. Understanding the difference between feedback and coaching as used in this model is essential to institutionalizing the model. Most other peer coaching models do not make this distinction because feedback and coaching are usually considered as being the same thing and presented together. Another unique feature of this model is that it is collaborative - one that considers all participants to be on the same professional level. The third unique feature of this model is that the teachers were organized into collegial support teams, usually by teaching field. The fourth unique feature of this model is that it requires less time than most other models.

When the model becomes operational or institutionalized throughout the campus, a monitoring and assessment component can be designed if thought necessary. Also, this model can be adapted and used at all educational levels.

## Background and Purpose of the Model

Morris Cogan's original work in clinical supervision at Harvard (1973) and in the Newton School System in 1973 began the idea of professionals helping each other. Robert Goldhammer (1980) also did major work at Harvard in clinical supervision as well as Robert H. Anderson (1993). Others such as Art Costa and Robert Garmston (1994) have done extensive work in the area of clinical supervision and cognitive coaching. Resident Supervisory Support for Teachers, an NDN program for staff development based in Washington, D.C., continues elements of clinical supervision. All of these, however, involve some type of supervision, evaluation, and judgment (Gottseman & Jennings, 1994).

The model being described, Peer Coaching for Educators, has little in common with the previous models. This model is based on the theory from Joyce and Brothers (Brandt, 1987; Joyce & Showers, 1982) and the practice of observing in the Effective Schools Training. In order to eliminate any vestige of supervision, evaluation, or judgment from peer coaching, a new model was written in May 1987, specifically for South Carolina by Dr. Barbara Gottesman, Office of Leadership and School Improvement, South Carolina Department of Education. Peer coaching was originally designed as the concluding module for South Carolina's Effective Schools Training Program. The present model is an independent staff development model and is used to maintain the skills often acquired in any other staff development activities.

To avoid any connotation of supervision or evaluation, this technique is called peer coaching. It involves teachers acting as peers and observers of each other in order to improve their own management and instruction in the classroom. Principals support the program by endorsing and introducing the concept to the entire faculty and providing training. The principal may participate in peer coaching by providing such things as: release time, class coverage, general support, a full-time substitute teacher, and by receiving training to better understand the program.

All professionals -- doctors, hairdressers, plumbers, professional athletes -- get critiques by their peers in order to improve their performances. Actors, dancers, and artists daily submit

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themselves to peer critiques to help them improve. Most education reform initiatives include a leadership development component in which educators coach, mentor, or critique their peers. Ted Sizer calls this "the critical friend." Interdisciplinary units and new math/science techniques require peer coaches. Total Quality Education (TQE) and systemic reform require that people coach each other and use teams for continuous improvement.

The training for this model was presented in three phases: Peer Watching, Peer Feedback, and Peer Coaching. The final phase, Peer Coaching, is a five-step process to provide teachers an easy structure for requesting and receiving a peer critique through a nonevaluative gathering of observed facts. The purpose of the training is to provide educators with the theory and guided practice in order to implement peer coaching in their own schools and classes. (Gottesman & Jennings, 1994)

## The Training Program

The training program was planned and presented by the assistant principal for instruction and an outside consultant from a local university. The training was provided to all faculty, administrators and librarians. The model was learned over a six-month period in three training phases: Overview and Peer Watching; Peer Feedback; and Peer Coaching. The three actual training days were the district designated staff development days (one in August, October and January).

The first training session (16 Aug 94) focused on: the real purpose of staff development and the importance of transferring new knowledge/skills into practice, defining peer coaching, the Estacado Model, some uses of peer coaching, why peer coach, overview of the five steps of peer coaching, some possibilities for peer coaching requests, and the three phases of training (Peer Watching, Peer Feedback, and Peer Coaching). The session ended with a description of peer watching and an assignment for each person to have completed four sessions of peer watching before the next training session.

The second training session (10 Oct 94) consisted of: learning power log as reflections, review of the overall process, discussion of terminology (the model;, the teacher, the coach, feedback, and coaching), demonstration of coaching skills (body language, active listening, and observation skills), the talk after the visit, and viewing of the ASCD video tape, Peer Coaching. The session ended with a review of the Peer Feedback phase, and an assignment for each person to have completed at least four sessions of peer feedback before the next training session.

The third training session (16 Jan 95) consisted of: power learning log as reflection, emphasis on reflection as a major characteristic of the Estacado Model of Collegial Coaching, review of the steps of the overall model, feedback vs. coaching, review of coaching skills, some techniques for the observation of teaching, the peer coaching phase, review of how the Estacado Model can be used, viewing of the ASCD video, Another Set of Eyes. The session ended with "Start Peer Coaching - Show Time!" and a suggested assignment of two coaching sessions by 20 Feb 95.

Appendix A (page 10) contains originals of many of the transparencies used in the training program.

## Some Lessons We Learned

One of the most important things we learned was that peer coaching is a powerful and effective way of assisting teachers to transfer new knowledge into practice. Also, there was consensus that the adapted South Carolina Model (the Estacado Model) was appropriate for the faculty at Estacado High School.

During and after the training, there were several lessons that we learned which included the following:

Communication is critical. Brief the administrative staff and expect dialogue from them before starting to work with the teachers. Administrative alignment of thinking in terms of interest and support must be evident.

Involve department chairpersons as early as possible. The clearer the overall picture and possible outcomes is to the instructional leaders, the more valuable the experience will be for all.

Time schedules must be pre-determined. Requesting teachers or collegial teams to get together with their leader or peer coach is not sufficient. Time sheets indicating "visitation space" and creative ideas for finding the necessary time for teacher visitation as well as give and take later is a valuable technique.

Consider having a central location for input. We used department chair offices for written and verbal input. This idea was too fragmented and "lonely." A mutually used "social place" like the teachers' lounge or the teachers' work room might be considered communication both vertically (between-up and down-grade levels and content areas) and horizontally (along content and single grade lines) is valuable.

The time(s) for training should be evenly spaced and tight. That is, do not allow too much time to elapse between training sessions. Sometimes the district designated times for staff development leave teachers "hanging" too long. There can and should be extra evenly spaced "mini-lessons" made available before and/or after classes.

Additional guided practice and examples. A common request from the teachers pertained to wanting additional practice and examples of certain parts of the model, especially the specific coaching skills. The two videos that were used were helpful but not sufficient. Role playing by the teachers is most important.

Additional training materials needed. An ideal training situation would be for every teacher be provided a personal copy of Peer Coaching for Educators (Gottesman & Jennings, 1994), or at least a copy be made available for each collegial team.

Administrative positive input is essential. Creative "job well done" input can be created. Positive "reward" connected to administrative teacher evaluations for "risk taking" would assist the intrinsic teacher effort speed up.

Prevent project from becoming personality dependent. Effort should be made to present such a project from becoming personality dependent (e.g., the project becoming too dependent on



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one or two key people). There should be careful planning to include a back-up procedure in the event of turnover or resignation of key people in the program.

Teachers' assessment. From comments made in the Teacher Reflection Logs and other observations, it appeared that most of the teachers liked and supported the concept of peer coaching. This was especially evident from comments of beginning teachers and new teachers to the building. Also, the student teachers from the local university benefitted from the experience. An unexpected positive teacher outcome occurred which was described as

> "... peer coaching was an opportunity for many isolated teachers to be invited 'back to the fold'. Teachers of elective subjects often feel 'left out'. I noticed the elective teachers of our campus begin an interaction with many content teachers, and relationships were born which were previously nonexistent."

## An Unanticipated Outcome

This staff development program, "Collegial Coaching: Transfer of Learning Through Reflective Practice," was designed to assist the teachers to improve specific teaching skills; however, it was noticed that the training program (starting in the Peer Feedback phase) had also become an effective "forum" for dialogue for teachers striving to better understand and work with diversity. It was observed that the teachers (especially the younger ones) were discussing and seeking ways to better work with the students in this particular school but were seriously discussing many other diversity topics/issues such as gender issues, disability issues, poverty issues, the white male issues, affirmative action issues, and sexual orientation issues. This newly discovered forum immediately became popular with the beginning teachers as well as the experienced teachers. Thus, we concluded that an unanticipated outcome of this staff development program was that it also served as an effective forum for dialogue to better understand diversity.

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